



835 491-2

A black and white portrait of Elisabeth Welch, a woman with dark, wavy hair, smiling and looking upwards and to the left. She is wearing a dark, sleeveless dress and a multi-strand pearl necklace. The background is dark and out of focus.

ELISABETH WELCH

A black and white portrait of Irving Berlin, a man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and out of focus.

THE
**IRVING
BERLIN
SONGBOOK**

**ELISABETH WELCH****THE
IRVING BERLIN SONGBOOK**
ARRANGED AND CONDUCTED BY **GORDON LANGFORD**
PRODUCED FOR RECORDS BY **JOHN YAP**

835 491-2

1. LET'S FACE THE MUSIC AND DANCE 3:10
2. HOW DEEP IS THE OCEAN 2:31
3. WHAT'LL I DO 2:47
4. WHEN I LOST YOU 2:26
5. FOOLS FALL IN LOVE 3:11
6. SAY IT ISN'T SO 3:29
7. YOU KEEP COMING BACK LIKE A SONG/REMEMBER 4:06
8. SHAKING THE BLUES AWAY 2:10
9. ALWAYS 2:25
10. I GOT LOST IN HIS ARMS 2:31
11. SNOOKEY OOKUMS 2:42
12. SUPPER TIME 2:03
13. WHITE CHRISTMAS 2:36
14. THE SONG IS ENDED 2:16

DDD



ELISABETH WELCH IN 1987

ELISABETH WELCH • THE IRVING BERLIN SONGBOOK

by STANLEY GREEN

Thirty years ago when I was just beginning to write about the music scene, I was assigned to do a magazine piece about Irving Berlin on the occasion of his 70th birthday. Soon after the issue appeared, I was amazed to receive a telephone call from Berlin himself just to tell me how pleased he was with the article. Totally taken aback, I could only mumble, "Thank you, Mr. Berlin . . .", but he quickly interrupted. "Irving is my name," he snapped.

Five years later, then working as a public-relations consultant to ASCAP, I was planning a series of radio programmes to send to stations all over the country in celebration of Berlin's 75th birthday. But Berlin would have none of it. "That's not ASCAP'S function," he told me firmly "Why single me out over thousands of others?"

These two incidents indicate just some of the special qualities of the man – impulsiveness, generosity, lack of pretension, modesty. Of course, there are those other qualities known to all – qualities that have made him, at the age of 100, the acknowledged master songwriter of our time and probably for all time to come. But from a purely personal view, I have never been able to disassociate the creative genius from the all-too-human being who, in our very first conversation, wanted me to call him by his first name and who felt that he should never have received any special treatment from his colleagues.

Through the years one of the great interpreters of Irving Berlin songs has been Elisabeth Welch who has recently recorded 15 of Berlin's choicest numbers that she has sung in nightclubs and on the radio. Miss Welch also has reason to have fond memories of Irving Berlin. In 1930, while she was appearing in a New York nightclub, one of her selections was Cole Porter's "Love for Sale," from a currently running comedy, *The New Yorkers*. Ray Goetz and Monty Wesley, the show's producer and director, were at the club one night with their friend, Irving Berlin, to audition Miss Welch as replacement for the singer who had introduced the number in the production. The men were enthusiastic about her but Goetz was concerned that she was black. "that's no obstacle," Berlin said. "She's a wonderful singer and if you want her in the show you can always find the right spot for her." And so they did.

The New Yorkers was Miss Welch's last New York appearance in 49 years. For most of that time she was a major attraction in London where she was headlined in some 15 book musicals and revues, the last being *Pippin* in 1973. She returned to New York in 1980 for a variety program titled *Black Broadway*, then came back six years later in a revue devoted to Jerome Kern's Hollywood songs and also in a one-woman show.

There have, of course, been any number of outstanding singers associated with Irving Berlin songs, but the elegant Miss Welch brings to them her own distinctive approach combining sensitivity, control, superb phrasing, clear diction, and a welcome respect for the writer's intentions. And whose works are more deserving of respect than Irving Berlin's?



ELISABETH WELCH IN 1934

LET'S FACE THE MUSIC AND DANCE. After their triumph in Irving Berlin's *Top Hat*, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers starred in their second Berlin movie, *Follow the Fleet*, which opened in 1936. The film's climax is a musical revue presented on board a ship. In the scene that sets the stage for their dance, Fred and Ginger appear as suicidal gamblers in Monte Carlo who, under the influence of the compelling ballad, gallantly decide to face the music together.

HOW DEEP IS THE OCEAN. In 1930, Irving Berlin wrote a song for Al Jolson called "To My Mammy." Though Berlin thought the number was mediocre, he did like the middle section, "How much does she love me? I'll tell you no lie/How deep is the ocean, how high is the sky?" Only a slight alteration was needed to use the section again as the main theme of one of the composer's most durable ballads.

WHAT'LL I DO. Irving Berlin's "What'll I Do," "All Alone," "Remember," and "Always" are the apotheosis of classic American waltzes. The lyric for "What'll I Do" originally included the lines, "What'll I do, my dear, with no one near, to tell my troubles to?," but Berlin soon realized how much more effective the words would be with the reference to a photograph – even if it didn't rhyme. Though not written specifically for a show, the song was added during the run of the 1923 *Music Box Revue* in which it was sung by Grace Moore and John Steel.

WHEN I LOST YOU. One of the composer's most personal expressions was this tender ballad written in 1913 after his first wife had died as a result of contracting typhoid fever during the couple's honeymoon in Cuba. As Alexander Woollcott, Berlin's biographer, once wrote, "The writing of the song seemed to have effected a kind of release . . . He had to write it. It gave him his first chance to voice his great unhappiness in the only language that meant anything to him."

FOOLS FALL IN LOVE. "My heart's on fire when I know I ought to keep cool," sang William Gaxton and Vera Zorina in *Louisiana Purchase*, a major Broadway hit of 1940. Berlin's first stage score in over six years proved conclusively that the master was still the master. According to the critic in the *World-Telegram*, "There is a swing and a tunefulness to Mr. Berlin's music that belong to nobody else in the songwriting business, and he has given us some of the most entrancing tunes of recent years."

SAY IT ISN'T SO. In 1932, Irving Berlin had not had a hit song since the prophetically titled "The Song Is Ended" five years earlier, and he was fearful that he had written himself out. "I had two songs, 'Say It Isn't So' and 'How Deep Is the Ocean,'" he recalled some years later, "but I was afraid to take a chance and I didn't do anything with them. It was only when my manager gave 'Say It Isn't So' to Rudy Vallee and it became a tremendous success that my courage finally came back."

YOU KEEP COMING BACK LIKE A SONG/REMEMBER. Written for Bing Crosby as the theme song of his 1946 movie *Blue Skies*. "You Keep Coming Back Like a Song" is one of a number of examples of how skillfully Berlin has been able to relate music to love. The ballad's second line, "A song that keeps saying remember," provided the cue for Elisabeth Welch's artful coupling with "Remember," written in 1925, which uses the repetition of its title to great effect. Then note that in the last eight bars the composer switches "Remember" to "You Promised" sung on the same three notes, then concludes with the touching statement, "But you forgot to remember."

SHAKING THE BLUES AWAY. The revivalistic number was first sung in the 1927 *Ziegfeld Follies* by Ruth Etting exhorting one and all to follow her advice in getting rid of the blues. Elisabeth Welch's rendition adds her own special charm and playfulness (note the way she sings the word "revival") and makes it sound as if it had been created just for her.

ALWAYS. Irving Berlin once told this writer, "I had completed the lyric up to the last part, but for weeks I couldn't think of a way to finish it. Whenever I'd demonstrate the song, I'd say, 'For the ending I'll write something like, "Not for just an hour, not for just a day, not for just a year, but always." But I'll polish it up and make it rhyme.' After struggling with it some more, it finally dawned on me that that was the only possible ending. Any more 'polishing' would have ruined it."

I GOT LOST IN HIS ARMS. Certainly Irving Berlin's biggest hit and arguably his finest score was *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), which also provided Ethel Merman with her longest running Broadway show. "I Got Lost in His Arms" is a prime example of the songwriter's ability to express an emotion through contrasting phrases – "I got lost but look what I found" – as well as his knack of writing melodies of artful simplicity.

SNOOKEY OOKUMS. Dating from 1913, "Snookey Ookums" was a vaudeville number that won renewed popularity when Fred Astaire and Judy Garland performed it in the 1948 movie *Easter Parade*. A ragtime put-down of an irritatingly mushy, baby-talking couple, the song – complete with its two-part verse – is one of the highlights of this collection.

SUPPER TIME. As *Thousands Cheer*, a legendary Broadway revue of 1933, was designed in the form of a newspaper, with every song, dance and sketch intended to illustrate a current event or feature. Though most of the show dealt satirically with lighthearted topics, Berlin insisted on including one number, "Supper Time," in which Ethel Waters expressed the anguish of one whose husband had just been lynched. As the singer once wrote, "If one song could tell the whole tragic history of a race, 'Supper Time' was that song."

WHITE CHRISTMAS. It was while sitting beside a swimming pool in Hollywood one day that Irving Berlin began imagining how a displaced Northerner might feel about a traditional snowy Christmas. This was promptly developed into a song and the song was promptly put into the 1942 movie, *Holiday Inn*, in which it was sung by Bing Crosby. Though the composer did not think it would become the film's biggest hit – he expected it to be "Be Careful, It's My Heart" – "White Christmas" eventually became the most successful song he ever wrote.

THE SONG IS ENDED. Simply and affectingly interpreted by Elisabeth Welch, "The Song Is Ended (But the Melody Lingers On)," is yet another example of Irving Berlin's skill at using opposite images in his lyrics, as well as his ability at using the metaphor of music in expressing a romantic emotion.



ELISABETH WELCH THE IRVING BERLIN SONGBOOK

ARRANGED AND CONDUCTED BY GORDON LANGFORD
PRODUCED FOR RECORDS BY JOHN YAP

Recorded at Abbey Road Studios, London
on April 22 and 23, 1987

Recording Engineer: John Kurlander
Digital Editing at Finesplice Studios, London
Editing Engineer: Ben Turner
MCPS

Irving Berlin photograph courtesy of
Chappell Music Library.

Assistant to the Producer: Anna Pavlou
Cover Design: Baker · Tamborini
Album Release Co-ordinator: Bruce C. Rowley

All Music and Lyrics by Irving Berlin
All Compositions Irving Berlin Music/ASCAP

© 1988 JAY Productions Ltd. Licensed to PolyGram Records, Inc. in the United States.

© 1988 JAY Productions Ltd. Manufactured and Marketed by PolyGram Classics, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc., 810 7th Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10019.

Warning: All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction is prohibited by law and may result in criminal prosecution.

ALL RIGHTS OF THE PRODUCER AND OF THE OWNER OF THE WORK REPRODUCED RESERVED. UNAUTHORIZED COPYING, HIRING, LENDING, PUBLIC PERFORMANCE AND BROADCASTING OF THIS RECORD PROHIBITED.



COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

835 491-2

DDD

ELISABETH WELCH
THE IRVING BERLIN SONGBOOK

- 1 LET'S FACE THE MUSIC AND DANCE 2 HOW DEEP IS THE OCEAN 3 WHAT'LL I DO
- 4 WHEN I LOST YOU 5 FOOLS FALL IN LOVE 6 SAY IT ISN'T SO 7 YOU KEEP
- COMING BACK LIKE A SONG/REMEMBER 8 SHAKING THE BLUES AWAY 9 ALWAYS
- 10 I GOT LOST IN HIS ARMS 11 SNOOKEY OOKUMS 12 SUPPER TIME
- 13 WHITE CHRISTMAS 14 THE SONG IS ENDED

© 1988 JAY Productions Ltd. Licensed to PolyGram
Records Inc., in the United States

MADE IN U.S.A.